

UNLESS WE PLAN NOW

Democracy and local government

by D. M. Goodfellow

'Defeat of Hitlerism is necessary so that there may be freedom ; but this war, like the last war, will produce nothing but destruction unless we prepare for the future now, unless we plan now for the better world we mean to build.' FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

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PREFACE

The object of this series of pamphlets is to encourage, and to aid, organised discussion of the social, economic and political problems, which have arisen or are arising out of the war. That is to say, they are intended for use by the discussion circles, debating societies and the like which are springing up in bodies such as H.M. Forces, Civil Defence Workers, Youth Groups, Church Groups, and Women's Societies. They are simply written, but the issues with which they deal have not, we hope, been unduly simplified. One of our pamphlets deals with the setting up and efficient running of such groups.

We believe that we have succeeded in finding writers who are thoroughly qualified to expound their subjects. Each of them has been asked to remember that his function is not to provide propaganda for any particular plan or doctrine, but to place before his readers the principal facts and points of view that must be taken into account if any agreed solution is to be found. Our authors have also been asked to base their approach upon the good of the community as a whole, rather than on the interests of any section, however sympathetic to them.

In order that these standards should be maintained the draft of every pamphlet has been scrutinised by an editorial committee. But the opinions expressed in them remain those of the writers and must not be taken to commit the Association as a whole.

Finally, with world opinion divided as it is to-day, some idealistic bias is unavoidable. We advocate democracy, and further we stand for what, generally speaking, our enemies in this war attack under the name of humanitarianism. By this we mean that men and women cannot be regarded merely as cogs in a machine of government, or as the instruments of a leader's will; on the contrary, they are possessed of fundamental rights both as individuals exercising freedom of judgment, and as citizens entitled to play an active part in the conduct of affairs.

And it follows from this—or so it seems to us—that a corresponding duty devolves upon the community as a whole. That duty is to secure for its members the fullest development of which they are capable in both these capacities, and at the same time to train them in respect for the equal rights and freedom of others. It is becoming daily clearer that this must entail changes in many social arrangements and assumptions, and we hope that this series of pamphlets will play some small part in ensuring that these changes are faced not with hostility and reluctance, but in an atmosphere of co-operation and good will.

THE ASSOCIATION FOR EDUCATION IN CITIZENSHIP
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Democracy and Local Government

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In the year 1875, well within the memory of some living people, no fewer than 8,913 people died of enteric in England. Some twenty years earlier, 6,005 Londoners died of cholera *in a single month*.

It was to meet situations such as this that our modern local Government was devised. Governments acted slowly in the nineteenth century because, as was said, the English people did not want to be bullied into health. But progress was gradually made, and by 1872 the country had been divided into a large number of sanitary districts and by 1894 each of these began to elect its own Council.

The main work of these Councils was to appoint Inspectors whose duty would be to track down nuisances, and Medical Officers who would detect epidemics at their source, and Civil Engineers who would lay much needed sewers.

In a way, we were frightened into our present system of local Government. Has it been a success? Well, in the year 1935 fewer than 200 persons in England and Wales died of enteric, and cholera is now unknown. The whole of this success is not due to local Government, but local Councils and their officials have been a part of the machinery whereby medical science has been applied to changing the whole conditions of our lives.

That is why, or one reason why, it is well worth our while to study local Government. In its present form it is a fairly modern invention, it has already helped to achieve much, and when it is further improved it will doubtless achieve even more.

Wherever you go in England and Wales you will see Town Halls and Council Offices, dust carts belonging to Blank Urban District Council, road works by Blank County Council, and, quite often, a great variety of enterprises belonging to Blank County Borough Council.

Counties, and smaller districts inside the Counties, had been made responsible for health and sanitation outside the big towns. These big towns became health authorities in their own right and came to be called "County Boroughs" in the year 1888.

By the time Queen Victoria died, every inch of England was cared for by being included in one of these local areas. In the year 1930 there were no fewer than 1,857 of them. Many of them were too

small and by the outbreak of the present war the number had been reduced to 1,530. Nobody would claim that these had all succeeded equally well in doing the work for which they had been created. Even in the year 1936 the Government had to come to the assistance of quite a number of the smaller Councils and give them considerable sums of money with which to lay sewers which ought to have been laid many years before. But the first big step had been taken towards making our country a reasonably clean and healthy place.

How Old is Local Government ?

The Local Government with which we shall mainly deal in this Pamphlet is, as we have said, largely a modern invention. Yet we shall understand it better if we realise that it has its roots deep in the past, that the doings of Townships, of Shires, of Burgesses, of Shire-reeves, very often in resistance to the power of the Kings, is part and parcel of the drama of English history and goes back to 1066 and before.

When the Romans left England, they left at least the remains of a number of cities which are inhabited to this day ; and the new settlers made clearings in forest and swamp throughout the land, so that English villages began to appear. These towns and villages existed even before there was any national government of England. When William the Conqueror took over, he found "strong local centres of power," and one of his tasks was to establish himself as the leading authority above them all. He took over certain duties from them. He made himself, as the central state, responsible for the maintenance of the peace and administration of justice. Indeed, he took over these most important duties from the local authorities of these days, and his doing so illustrates a very important point, namely, that wherever we find local and central government side by side—which is practically everywhere in the world—we find a kind of struggle for power going on between them. Each will try to enlarge its own importance by taking duties from the other. Or sheer force of circumstances may give extra responsibilities to one and not to the other. But the balancing of power is always there, and it can be clearly traced from the Norman Conquest to the Beveridge Report.

Not only the maintenance of the peace, but also the improvement of towns, appears very early in English history, and involves both King and Borough. Hereford and Oxford were apparently made to pave their streets in the time of Henry III.

This was done by the King issuing writs which secured the Royal protection for the work, while its actual performance was carried out by the towns themselves.

Even in sanitary matters, local government did not merely spring into existence out of nothing in the nineteenth century. The first sanitary statute is dated 1388, and in 1532 a Statute of Sewers was passed. Some effort was made to prevent refuse being thrown into rivers and streams. The Statute was passed by the Central Government : it was enforced by local boroughs and other bodies of citizens. This is very much what happens to-day. The English local government which we are studying in this Pamphlet is, in its present forms, of very recent date, and even it may be radically changed in the near future, but the pattern was laid many generations ago.

Why Local Government ?

Why should we have this large number of separate local authorities ? The number is even larger than the 1,530 which we have mentioned, since there are also more than 6,000 Parish Councils doing such things as lighting country roads and burying people. There are, in the Country, more than another 1,500 committees and boards for special purposes such as the management of rivers. Even this does not tell the whole story, since London itself has a perfect maze of councils and committees, numbering no less than 355 in peace time.

Would it be better to have fewer Councils ?

All this may seem to make local Government a somewhat difficult matter for the beginner. It is only too true that when you get a good idea as regards improving your town or district you are liable to be put off by experts who explain to you that, although your idea may be quite sound in itself, it would involve your council in an awful rigmarole of administrative difficulties, so that your improvement may not be practicable after all.

But this is all the more reason why we should study local Government. It can, in the end, get things done, and we may see in this pamphlet that there are various ways in which it could be improved.

Do you think that Local Government should be taught in Schools ?

Sometimes we may feel that most things could be done much better by the State. It is quite possible that they could and, further, it is very likely that many of them will be, in the fairly near future. As we go to press, the Beveridge Report is published. If this Report is adopted, it will mean that our local authorities will lose altogether one of their oldest duties, the relieving of the poor. State payments will provide security for all. Also in regard to electricity and to Health Services, and to quite a number of other things, it is often shown that the State could provide them better than local authorities do, and indeed it has already begun to do so.

Yet it is practically certain that we, like every other Country in the world, shall always have some form of local Government. This is because local people always want some say in what is to happen to their town or district. And I think we shall agree that it is healthy that they should. Even if it means that some services are a little less efficient than they otherwise would be (and this is a point which you should consider very carefully), it is still a good thing to develop local responsibility. It is the best training ground for practical democracy.

But all power from Parliament

Though we shall doubtless always have our local government in this country, we must yet establish it in our minds that Parliament must always be supreme. Parliament has created our local authorities as we know them. It can control them, and in war time, in particular, it does so, and very thoroughly. It can change them, if it chooses, to any extent, and many people believe that it will do so as part of post-war re-construction. A Parliamentary decision could even wipe out local government overnight. In some countries, such as Canada, Australia and the United States of America, there are "states," which have rights of their own. An American state such as Massachusetts

will have its own domestic law relating to such matters as education and social welfare, and it will jealously guard this law against any interference from Washington. But no English city or county is in this position. Being an old country, we are thoroughly unified under one Parliament.

Parliament created our local authorities. Does it do much for them now? The answer is, Yes. It controls and helps them in many ways, of which the following are the most important:—

It pays out to them very considerable sums of money. This is paid in very complicated ways, which we cannot possibly explain here, but among the most important things is that known as the Block Grant. This is a payment which was started by Mr. Neville Chamberlain when he was Minister of Health, and its great feature is that, the poorer the local authority, the higher the payment per head of its population, for purposes with which that Ministry deals. Thus some of the poorest authorities in the country, such as Stockton, Hartlepool, Jarrow, and Workington, receive a sum each year which is equal to what they could collect on a 10/- local rate, or even more.

If these districts now levy rates of about £1 in the £1 they would, but for the Block Grant, have to levy their citizens at the rate of 30/- in the £1 (i.e., every pound of the rent). Well-to-do local authorities, on the other hand, such as Wallasey, Birmingham, Blackpool and Eastbourne, will receive the equivalent of only about 2/- in the £1 of their rates. This grant has undoubtedly enabled a number of poor authorities to continue their existence. They do not have to apply for it, and it is not earmarked for any special purpose.

It pays special grants for particular purposes, notably for education, civil defence and the upkeep of roads.

Through the various ministries, it controls and guides the local authorities.

If a local authority wants to build a new school, it must send the proposition up to the Board of Education. The officials there, who are extremely able public servants, will apply certain tests. Is the school required? This will depend on such points as the density of the nearby population, the condition of available school buildings, and the suitability of the design of the new building. If the new proposition satisfies all of these tests, Grant, as we say, will be payable. That is, the local authority will have to pay only a portion of the cost of the new school.

If, in peace-time, a local authority wishes to demolish some slums, an Inspector will be sent by the Ministry of Health to see whether the property really should be pulled down. In recent years these Ministry of Health Inspectors were able to give much encouragement to local authorities in this good work. The same Ministry would then examine plans for the houses designed to replace the demolished property and, on these plans being approved, very substantial grants were paid to enable the new houses to be built.

In many ways such as these an active local authority would be encouraged and a sluggish one stimulated. But there were drawbacks. In an "economy crisis," such as we experienced in 1930, the central government was able to slow down municipal enterprise, possibly with but little regard to local needs. Further, there always remains with us the problem of the local authorities which are either too backward or too poor to do their work properly even with help from

Whitehall. It is still possible to see neighbouring districts, with practically equal conditions in all respects, one of which has energetically cleared its slums and re-housed its people, while the other has done as little as possible. The existence of backward authorities is one of the standing problems of English local government. There appear to be only two real solutions ; one, to lay down a national minimum which could be enforced by the government departments concerned ; two, to amalgamate the backward authorities with others of more progressive character.

Do you think that Local Councils should have more power to do as they like ?

What a local Council can do

There is no simple answer to the question, "What can a local Council do ?" This is because there are five different kinds of local Councils, and further, because each one of the 1,530 Councils in this Country will have local arrangements and powers. The question becomes even more complicated when we ask not what a local Council can do but what it *does* do. Many Councils have powers which they do not use, and one of the main criticisms of our local Government system is surely the extreme complexity of this situation. If only it were possible to say "Blank is a County Borough ; therefore Blank will do so and so and so and so," then it would be much more possible than it is at present to understand our local Government system and to achieve reforms when we want them.

The situation is made a little more difficult yet by the fact, which is one of the most important facts in our study, that, while Parliament has told local authorities that they *must* do certain things such as cleaning their streets and educating their children, it has also told them that they *may* do certain other things. This permissive legislation, as it is sometimes called, has the advantage of enabling more progressive local authorities to go ahead, while not attempting to force all of them up to the same standard. Thus, local authorities may provide baths and washhouses, and public libraries, but they are not obliged to provide them. The result in practice is that reasonably rich areas and towns are usually well provided with these facilities, while those which cannot afford them are enabled to escape what would be a heavy burden on their rates. The Education Act of 1918 gives local authorities power to set up Nursery Schools. Up to the outbreak of the present war, only a relatively small number had availed themselves of this permission, even though, if they did, they were assured of financial assistance from the Government. Another most important example of permissive legislation was as regards the provision of meals in schools. Local authorities, at least up to the outbreak of this war, had power to provide school meals for children who needed them, but were not compelled to do so. The result was that some of the districts in which meals were most badly needed did not have them because, it appears, the local authority, once it began, would have had to provide so many that its rates would have been badly overburdened. These are just one or two examples of our English system of "adoptive" or "permissive" laws. Wherever you live, you should try to make a list of the laws which your own local authority has either adopted or not adopted, as the case may be.

To illustrate local differences a little further, we may find two Urban Districts next door to each other. They may have about the same number of people each, and about the same amount of money. Their people may live in just the same circumstances, such as being employed in the same works, so that they will require much the same services. From any common sense point of view, these Councils ought to be doing much the same kind of thing. But there is not the slightest guarantee that this will be so, and nothing is more disheartening to the beginner in English public life than to be confronted at the outset with these confusions. One of these Councils may run its own elementary schools, while the other has these schools provided for it by a County Council whose offices may be an hour's bus ride distant. Even if they both conduct their own elementary education, one may have modern central schools while the other may not have any. One may conduct its own Maternity and Child Welfare Clinic, while the other may have this service performed for it by the County, or may, in extreme cases, even not have a Clinic at all.

One may have its own Public Library while the other has a branch of the County Library, or, quite possibly, one or both of them will have no Library at all. One may choose to spend its money on keepings its roads in good condition, while the other may have been satisfied to put up its new houses, and to leave them with just passable roads. One may, by arrangement, send some of its sick people to a hospital in a neighbouring County Borough, while the other may have an Infectious Diseases Hospital of its own and may send other patients to County Hospitals. One may have trams and buses by arrangement with a neighbouring town, while the other depends upon private enterprise for its transport.

Think of the Local Government boundaries in your neighbourhood ; on which side of them is it better to live ?

This list could be continued almost indefinitely. We have given it so far in order to show one of the main facts about English Local Government as we now have to deal with it. The beginner must not be discouraged. He will learn by experience, he may help to shake public opinion so that these things may be improved in the course of time, and, for his immediate help, we shall give here a very brief guide to the main Local Government Authorities and the things which they may or must do.

* County Boroughs

These are generally large or medium size towns. They include the great cities such as Birmingham, Leeds, and Manchester (but not London, which has a Local Government system peculiar to itself), and, going down the list, such towns as Barnsley, Bootle and Tynemouth. There are 83 County Boroughs, 15 of them (pre-war) with populations of less than 80,000, and ranging up to Birmingham with its clear 1,000,000.

A County Borough may and will do everything that any Local Authority in this country is permitted to do. If you live in a County Borough you may find it fairly easy to get a grip of the subject so far as your own town is concerned. It will carry out the complete range of public health duties (covering such miscellaneous provisions as the disposal of refuse, control of nuisances, the tracking down of epidemics, the control of tuberculosis, and including a great number of minor

matters, though still important, such as the provision of libraries and public baths).

It will have a complete educational system—elementary, secondary and technical.

It will look after certain classes of poor people through its Public Assistance Officer and Committee, though if the Beveridge Report is adopted it will be likely to lose this duty.

Until very recently it would be responsible for the protection of the lives and properties of its citizens against fire, though this is another duty which has now been taken over by the State. The only question is whether the N.F.S. will be disbanded when the war is over and hundreds of local councils once more left to buy fire pumps as best they can. All of you will be able to give examples of fires which have been allowed to burn too long because the unfortunate house was just outside a town boundary, and we all know that houses in the country, whether mansions or cottages, have stood very little chance once they caught fire.

Is it right that a big town should be able to provide itself with a good Fire Service, ignoring its small neighbours?

While we do not want to see local authorities deprived of their powers, we do want to feel sure that fires will be tackled on the farms as well as in the towns and we may hope that after the war we shall have a fire service which will maintain at least the advantage of the N.F.S. in that it attends equally to town and country and ignores as far as possible our numerous local Government boundary lines.

A county borough will also be responsible for its own streets.

It will, in peace time, be responsible for its own slum clearance and for building council houses. You may, if you choose, regard this as an extension of its health services: the Sanitary Inspector is the connecting link: this most important officer detects unhealthy conditions in houses. These houses may then be grouped into a "clearance area" and demolished. New houses then have to be built.

Has your Local Council demolished many old houses and built many new ones?

County Boroughs also have, a great many of them, powers to trade. Some years ago this fact would have been regarded as one of the most important in our whole study. Indeed, it might have taken up the great bulk of this little pamphlet. Intense public controversy used to range around such questions as, "should gas, water and electricity be municipally owned?" It was regarded as a matter of prime importance, many people believing that public ownership of these things would lead to great public benefit, and others believing that it would lead to disaster through the stifling of private enterprise. The result is that a considerable number of county boroughs now own their own gas, water, electricity and transport, or some of these.

But this question has now lost some of its vitality. Gas is still largely in the hands of local companies and local authorities, but electricity has shown itself to have many more uses, and to be capable of being carried much more readily to wherever it may be wanted. Whereas some thirty years ago it could best be produced by towns, it is now best produced over much larger areas, and it is largely in the hands of the national government. The days of municipal enterprise both in gas and electricity appear to be numbered.

With regard to water, it is now recognised that no town should be allowed to monopolize a supply. If a number of towns and country areas all draw their water from one river or lake, then it is clear that they should combine to act as one water authority. With regard to transport, one of the most noticeable developments of the past twenty years has been the way in which motor buses have begun to run throughout country areas, linking them to towns. In the old days, a County Borough could develop its own transport system, that is to say, its own trams for the purpose of taking people from one part of the town to another. All that is now changed. People now want to go from one town to another, or from the middle of a town out into a neighbouring area where they will now live. A great many people, in the past twenty years, developed the habit of working in a County Borough and living somewhere else, outside its boundaries.

So that it would seem that while County Boroughs have powers to run these four trading services, their best days in this respect may be over.

Do you think that Town Councils should have their own buses?

County Councils

Just as County Boroughs are really the simplest form of local government in England and Wales, so Counties are the most difficult to understand. They govern those parts of Counties which happen to be outside of County Borough boundaries. This means that their areas often have very awkward shapes. It means also that they (partly) govern quite a number of important towns, which just happen not to have been made into County Boroughs. We shall deal with these under the next heading. County Councils thus have the problem of (partly) governing some important towns such as Cambridge, Beckenham, Barking, Ealing, Edmonton, Luton, Newcastle-under-Lyne, and Stockton-on-Tees, as well as the wildest country districts. This imposes a heavy strain on County Councils, because towns and farming areas often need different things and may often fall to loggerheads.

We have said that County Councils "partly" govern towns and country areas. That is the next curious thing about our administrative counties. They do not completely govern any place. So that if you happen to live anywhere outside of a County Borough you may not find it too easy all at once to understand what is happening on your local councils, for you will have two (not counting your parish council). The County Council will provide certain services while others will be provided by what is known as a "County District," which may be either a municipal borough, or an urban district or a rural district.

County Councils, which have grown in importance in recent years, will invariably look after the great hospital services, which include those dealing with tuberculosis and venereal diseases, and will also in every case provide secondary schools. It will also administer public assistance (until the Beveridge Report is adopted). It will also look after main highways. It will have a police force which will nearly always operate through the whole of the county area. It will very likely draw up what are known as town plans for development of roads and buildings. It will have no trading services whatever.

Are you in favour of small police forces, or would you rather have bigger ones, and not so many of them?

In a good many places, but not in all, it will provide maternity and child welfare clinics and elementary schools, as well as libraries.

Thus, it will deal in the main with many fewer services than are handled by any County Borough. Nevertheless, County Councils are in some cases extremely important bodies, catering, as regards their limited number of services, for more people than are covered by any County Borough, and, while some counties, such as the Isle of Ely, Huntingdon, the Soke of Peterborough, and Rutland, are very small, others, such as Essex, Durham, Kent, Lancashire and Middlesex have very large budgets indeed.

Municipal Boroughs

We have already had a short list of the principal Municipal Boroughs. There are, in all, 309 of them. They are not all as big as those already mentioned, 21 of which had populations of more than 60,000. Quite a number of Municipal Boroughs have less than 20,000 people.

A Municipal Borough is invariably a town, as its name implies, but it is a town which is not reckoned able to manage the whole of its own affairs. A number of its most important services will be done for it by the County in which it happens to be situated. This County will in almost every case provide the large hospitals and the more elaborate Health Services required by the citizens of the Municipal Borough. The County will also provide the needy among those citizens with Public Assistance. It will in a great many cases police the Municipal Borough (at the moment of writing we hear that the Home Secretary is depriving a number of towns of their own Police Forces ; this means that they will be put under their own Counties for this purpose).

Members of a Municipal Borough Council will thus find themselves responsible for the sanitary side of Public Health, but not very much for the Medical side ; they will have full powers, within their financial resources, to provide parks and libraries, and they are full housing authorities. They will also, almost certainly, be responsible for their own elementary schools.

There is no reason whatever why a Municipal Borough should not have its own gas, water, electricity and transport. Legally, this depends upon whether Parliament has ever granted the necessary powers to each particular Borough. And in practice quite a number of Municipal Boroughs control their electricity undertakings to the extent of drawing substantial "profits" from them for the relief of rates, thus acting according to early socialist teachings. A smaller number of Municipal Boroughs have tramway systems of their own, and a great many of them have their own markets and slaughter-houses. Very few have their own gas undertakings, gas being frequently supplied by private companies, while a great many of them get their water by co-operating with their neighbours through a Joint Board.

On the whole, if you live in a Municipal Borough you may find that membership of the Council gives you very fair opportunities for useful activity, but you will also find, even on the best of Municipal Borough Councils, that a number of very important things are outside your control.

Urban District Councils

Coming down the list, we arrive at Urban District Councils. In actual fact, there is no difference in principle between these and the Municipal Borough Councils; they simply have, on the whole, somewhat smaller powers, though some active and fortunate Urban Districts will have more people, more money, and more activities than some of the smaller and less developed Municipal Boroughs. But both are "County Districts," that is to say, they only partly care for their own people. Some of the services are carried out by the County Council.

Many Urban Districts, indeed the great bulk of them, have populations of between 20,000 and 40,000, which means that they are slightly smaller than most Municipal Boroughs. On the other hand, many of them cover considerably bigger areas. Perhaps this gives us the real key to the difference between Municipal Boroughs and Urban Districts.

Many of these Boroughs are ancient, with Charters telling of their historical standing, and any one of them stands a good chance of being a real town, that is, an area completely covered with houses, save, we hope, for its parks and playing fields; with one main street and a main shopping and amusement centre; a place in which people can walk from one street to another without going through fields; a place in which all the inhabitants have at least some notion that they have interests in common. An Urban District, on the other hand, while it may in the course of time have developed into a real town, is more likely, even in very industrial areas, to include a considerable agricultural acreage. It may often be accurately described as a *district*—not a town. Urban districts known to the present writer are made up of from five to eight villages, some of them close together, but others quite far apart. People often talk as if they belonged not to "Blank Urban District," but to the village or little township of Embley or Slipway, which merely happen by the law of the land to be a part of the Urban District.

Urban Districts are often of great importance in that, following the motorisation of England in the early 1920's, great numbers of people, working in towns, either County Boroughs or Municipal Boroughs, have had their houses built outside these towns, in Urban Districts, in their pursuit of the Country and the fresh air. Thus Urban Districts to-day are in quite a number of cases no longer collections of villages but really the suburbs of large towns.

Do you think it right that people should be able to go outside Town boundaries to live and pay lower rates there, leaving the people inside the Town to pay higher rates in consequence?

As regards the ordinary run of Council duties, there is so little legal difference between Urban Districts and Municipal Boroughs that we need not spend time upon it. The first real difference arises in the way in which these duties (Health, Sanitation, Education, Upkeep of Roads, etc.), are carried out. Public Services tend to be more costly in a district than in a town and, mainly owing to the greater distances, it is generally impossible to have an equally high standard of service. A much greater mileage of roads has to be maintained. Children have to travel much greater distances to school, and the schools may tend to be smaller and not to be so well lighted as in a town. It will be a good deal more difficult to provide clinics

for expectant mothers and for babies. It is not likely that the average Urban District will have enough extra wealth to overcome its handicap of a big acreage.

Would it be a good idea for the rich towns to have to contribute towards the expenses of neighbouring districts?

The second real difference arises also from the scattered nature of many Urban Districts and the suburban nature of others. Few Urban Districts have developed those trading services upon which such great hopes were at one time based. Only a few of them have even markets and slaughter houses which, as we saw, were a very common—and profitable—possession of Municipal Boroughs.

One trading service possessed by nearly all Urban Districts, as well as by every other type of local authority, is that of burial grounds and cemeteries. These are nearly always run "at a loss." Another new and very great trading service has developed within the past twenty years, that of building and letting houses. Urban Districts have had full rights in this matter and many of the more energetic ones have greatly developed their civic activities as a result, though often marred by unseemly squabbles and charges of favouritism when it came to selecting tenants for the coveted house.

Another difference between Urban Districts and Municipal Boroughs is that the latter are "Incorporated," whereas the former are not. This means that whereas an Urban District has but a Chairman, a Municipal Borough has a Mayor with robes and chain. These insignia are generally believed by elected representatives to confer a certain dignity upon them and their actions. Municipal Boroughs, like County Boroughs, also have Aldermen, which Urban Districts do not. This undoubtedly makes borough councils less democratic, since aldermen may sit for a number of years without seeking re-election. They are appointed *by the Council*, not the electorate, being voted into their position by their fellow councillors.

Rural District Councils

These cover a very great part of the surface of England. Generally speaking, they cater for the farm lands, though there are important exceptions to this. There are undoubtedly districts upon which factories have developed or coal mines been dug, which are still classed as Rural. Legally, Rural District Councils have almost the same powers as Urban District Councils, except that they never run their own maternity and child welfare services or any part of their education or their libraries, while only some of them look after their own roads. None of them have any trading services except, again, the important and new one of housing. They will also lack some of the bye-laws by which crowds may be controlled in streets and other town nuisances prevented. Like Urban Districts, they will depend upon their County Councils for the great bulk of their services. As with other sorts of Local Authorities, however, much will depend upon the circumstances of each individual Rural District Council.

Parish Councils

These must here be dealt with even more briefly than were the Rural District Councils. This does not mean that they may not be interesting

and useful in themselves. Some of them provide an excellent training ground for public representatives, and if you live in a Rural area you will generally be well advised to begin by seeking membership of your Parish Council or attending Parish Meetings. Parishes have powers of burial, of the provision of small parks and of allotments and, strangely enough, of the lighting of some quite important roads, though one would naturally think that this should be seen to by the County Council, which builds and maintains the roads. An interesting development of some Parish Councils is that they take it upon themselves to advise larger authorities as to jobs which they think ought to be carried out. This advice may carry more weight than if it came from individual citizens, and may be welcomed by the District and County Councils.

Would it not be a good thing for all main public buildings to display prominently diagrams showing who controls what in the area, and also maps showing where the important buildings and offices are to be found?

How Many Councillors are there ?

'It is not easy to count the number of Councillors in England'. Indeed, it has probably never been done. But it is interesting and important, because democracy depends upon its elected representatives—as well as upon other people who consent to be co-opted on to various committees. Parliamentary representation, we may all agree, appears to work reasonably well, and to stand up particularly well in this country to those buffets of circumstance which might almost be expected to overthrow it. Yet the whole of Great Britain is represented in the House of Commons by just over 600 members. By comparison, we may come to the conclusion that Local Government suffers from far too many elected persons, and that fascinating writer, Robert Sinclair, has actually counted the number of Councillors and Committeemen in the London area, while the present writer has done the same for the North of England.

In the London area, covered by 109 councils of one kind or another, and by a number of other Committees, there are no fewer than 6,390 "amateur legislators and administrators. . . . It would be true to say that for every policeman you see on active duty in the streets of London there is a Councillor, committeeman or boardman hidden in the background, who helps to rule London by means of a blotting-pad, a casting vote, the minutes of the last meeting and other familiar paraphernalia of the school debating society."

In the North of England (namely Cumberland, Westmorland, Northumberland, Durham and the North Riding of Yorkshire) there are, very roughly, 2,500,000 people. Their local government is carried on by no fewer than 121 local authorities. (More than 1,000,000 people, in Birmingham, are served by one local authority). On the 121 local councils of the North there are almost exactly 3,656 elected Councillors, not counting the co-opted committeemen who helped to swell Robert Sinclair's total for London. Actually, sensational as Sinclair's figure is, the figure for the North of England bids fair to be much more so. For the 6,390 Councillors and Committeemen of London serve a population about four times as large as that of the North of England, so that, if we were to add the co-opted members on to the number of our elected Councillors in the North, the situation might be twice or three times "as bad" as in London.

We cannot take it for granted that a very large number of elected persons is in itself a bad thing. It might, if Local Government happened to be truly efficient and democratic, be a very good thing. It means that a very large number of people indeed, in the course of their lives, get experience of administering and making laws, and know what it is to carry the weight of being an elected person. It should also mean that every citizen, without exception, should know, personally or even intimately, his representatives on his Local Council. But everything in practice depends upon how good and how democratic Local Government is. It is only too true in real life that a great many citizens do not know even the names of their Councillors. Robert Sinclair shows, as also does Dr. Robson, what a record of inefficiency the Governments of London have to account for. If a large number of people are merely trained in bad ways of public life through being elected representatives, then it would certainly be better not to have so many. The real purpose of this pamphlet is to enable people to begin to study local government so that they may begin to judge for themselves as to how good or otherwise it is.

How many Councillors have you?

Do you know them personally?

At a Council Meeting

Council meetings are nearly always held in specially built Chambers. As a rule these have rows of well-upholstered seats, woodwork of imposing quality, and somewhat grand armchairs for the Mayor and the Clerk and possibly one or two other important people.

If there is only a Chairman, as in a District Council, there will probably be very little extravagant show. But if there is a Mayor, or more particularly a Lord Mayor, then each meeting of the Council may be carried out with an extravagant and even gaudy array of red robes, gold chains, gold snuff boxes, enormous maces, ceremonial swords, and footmen or ushers in coloured uniform.

The whole is in strong contrast to the House of Commons, which contents itself with the Speaker and one or two Clerks in wigs and plain black gowns, and "Black Rod," knee breeches.

At the Council meeting, the chair will be taken by the Chairman, Mayor or Lord Mayor, and others present will be the Councillors, the Alderman (sometimes on special seats), the Clerk, sitting next to the Mayor, the other main officials of the council, the representatives of the press, and possibly some members of the public.

Procedure will vary from one council to another but ordinarily there will first of all be a "question time"; then reports submitted by various committees of the Council will be considered, then resolutions tabled by Councillors may be taken.

Question time, which is an extremely important daily occurrence in the House of Commons, plays but a small part in most Council meetings. There is a deep reason for this. Questions are the instrument whereby Members of Parliament probe into the actions of the Civil Service, which is entrusted with the administration of the laws passed by Parliament; that is to say, the Civil Servants are left to do what Parliament has told them to do, and Parliament constantly questions them, through the Ministers, in order to see that they are doing it properly. But in local Government the system is quite different.

Councillors have never left their Civil Servants, known as Council officials, to carry out independently the instructions of the Council. On the contrary, members of the Council have always formed themselves into Committees for the purpose of carrying out their own instructions. Officials attend these Committees and advise them, but may not vote. Thus Local Councillors are themselves supposed to be acquainted with the details of administration, and do not ask a lot of questions.

Like everything else in local government, this practice should be critically watched by students and all active citizens. Committees meet in secret, and since Councillors will not publicly ask questions which may make themselves uncomfortable, we have the roots of that secrecy which so often breaks relationships between Councils and the people. *Perhaps we cannot expect Councillors to ask searching questions of each other in full Council. Yet is not questioning the administration the very basis of democracy? Does Parliamentary practice prove this? How would you propose to introduce a similar system into local government?*

In the next part of the Council business, the consideration of the reports of committees, we see the kernel of local Government. Since Councillors attempt not merely to decide what can be done, that is, to legislate, but also to do it themselves, they form themselves into Committees. This number will vary enormously from Council to Council, but there must at least be a committee to carry out each main part of the Council's work.

There must thus be an Education Committee, a Police (known as the Watch) Committee, a Health Committee, and so forth. The Education Committee, at any Council Meeting at which you or I might have attended in peace-time, might have reported in favour of drawing up plans for a new school. The Watch Committee might have reported in favour of equipping its Police Force with bicycles, and the Health Committee might have recommended a new salary scale for its nurses. The full Council would then have the opportunity of opposing or supporting these proposals. Generally speaking, they would be carried, since members of the Committees concerned would obviously have given them detailed consideration, and the full Council would not care, as the result of a short debate, to challenge the outcome of months of consideration by those of its members who sat on the various Committees. Further, and this is very important, the political party which held a majority on each Committee would also hold a majority on the full Council. But, if a minority choose to put up a determined opposition, there would always be the chance of a full dress debate.

Generally speaking, a committee report would be adopted provided that one of the political parties held a clear majority. Indeed, on quite a number of Councils, it is regarded as presumptuous to criticise the findings of a Committee. Committees are becoming very independent and there is a danger of Councils, as such, losing their power. In some towns, this tendency had gone so far that committees are not even required to submit reports to the Council, except only as regards individual items of expenditure.

Our final impression of the council meeting may be a mixed one, and everything must of course depend upon what kind of council it was that we attended. A meeting of a small Urban or Rural District Council, briefly confirming the minutes of the various committees,

may strike us as very business-like, but it may leave us wondering why so much business has to be discussed in the secrecy of the committees. Indeed, if any difficult point arose, we might even have had to leave the Council Chamber for a time while the matter was being discussed "in committee."

If it was a meeting of a County Council that we attended, our experience would have been slightly different. We should have had the feeling that here was an assembly which did not meet often—probably only four times a year—which had the responsibility of caring for a great many people spread over a very large area, and which dealt with only the more important services required by these people, leaving the minor ones to Local Councils. At the County Council meeting we should find a businesslike atmosphere and very few trappings. At the same time, we should again be aware, as a general rule, that all the real work was done in the secrecy of the committees. We should probably learn very little from attending the Council meeting unless we had been fortunate enough to be there when some particular point of policy was under discussion.

It is true to say that, in the case of the larger County Councils at least, the scale of the business is so large and the distances to be travelled by the Councillors so great, that the average Councillor can know but little of what is going on. Once more we may be left amazed at the contrast between the national Parliament and the Council meeting which we have just attended. Parliament meets a great many days in every year and probably sits for five or six hours on every one of those days. The whole field of national affairs is thoroughly discussed and "rebel" members are encouraged rather than otherwise. Visitors are welcomed and the press is always present. The County Council may meet four times a year and each meeting may only last an hour or two.

Which of these bodies is likely to be the more democratic? or the more efficient?

Chairmen of Committees

Just as every M.P. presumably wants to be a Minister, so every Local Councillor wants to be a Chairman of a Committee. These Chairmen are in many ways the key-stone of our local government. There are many differences between them and Cabinet Ministers, but essentially they perform the same duty. In a democracy there must always be some way in which the elected representatives find contact with the officials. A Cabinet Minister is a member of Parliament who becomes responsible for a Government office, such as the Admiralty and occupies a room actually inside that office so that, on the one hand, he can see that the instructions of Parliament are carried out there and, on the other hand, he can go back to Parliament and report on the progress of the work, receive suggestions, and answer criticisms. So far, the Chairman of a Local Authority's committee is in a somewhat similar position. The only big difference is that, instead of going by himself or with one assistant into the office of his department, he will preside at a committee table with the head officials and a number of other Councillors.

But other important differences arise in at least two other ways. One, is, that the Cabinet Minister is a member of the Cabinet, an

extremely important committee which meets and decides upon the action of the Government. Our Local committee Chairman is not a member of any local cabinet, because there is no such thing. A National Cabinet will resign when it loses the confidence of the House of Commons. There will then be the formation of a new Government, and possibly even a general election. But a Local Council carries on automatically until the date of the next election. The whole council may stand for re-election every three years, or one third of it may stand for re-election each year. In the meantime, public opinion may have changed, the council may have ceased to represent the views of the electorate, but it makes no difference. It goes on until the next election date. Is this a good or a bad thing?

Another big difference is that in our Parliamentary Government we have one chief ruler with an outstanding position and sometimes, as in the cases of Gladstone, Disraeli, Asquith, Lloyd George and Churchill, with an outstanding personality. This ruler is known as Prime Minister. In practice he has come to have very great power. In local government we have no-one whatever in a similar position. The Mayor merely presides at Council meetings.

A Prime Minister, no matter how powerful he may be, is generally exceedingly sensitive to House of Commons opinion and to public criticism and, owing to the openness of our Parliamentary system, these criticisms and this opinion will reach him in considerable volume. He will in consequence very carefully watch the work of each Minister and the result, as we know, is frequent changes in the Cabinet. If a Minister of War is not getting results, he quickly disappears, even though he may be a person of great wealth, powerful connections and considerable ability. Nothing like this happens with Chairmen of committees. If a new political party gets power on a Local Council, it is quite possible that these chairmen may be changed. Otherwise, it is only too likely that, once elected, they will hold their position into ripe old age.

The Officials

Each Council employs certain officials, according to the duties with which it is entrusted. Since we already know about these duties, we need not give an exhaustive list of the officials. The most important generally are the Clerk, the Treasurer, the Director of Education, the Medical Officer of Health, the Engineer, the Surveyor, and the Architect. As new work develops, new officials have to be engaged. For example, not nearly so many Architects were needed before Municipal Housing developed as are to be found now, and when the newest of the social services, Town Planning, comes into its own, it will be necessary either for Architects to qualify themselves very highly in this subject, or, better still, for Councils to employ special Town Planning Officers. Each Council appoints its own officials and determines their rates of pay and other conditions of service. This means that there are very great differences between different councils. Some pay very well and insist upon very high qualifications; others are afraid of paying high salaries;—and many others again are too poor to afford a full staff of highly qualified officials. This last point undoubtedly indicates one of the main problems of Local Government.

There is no national standard for local Government officials and no

national set of examinations. Here again we see a big contrast between the Local Service and the National. Entry into the national civil service is purely by merit, tested by highly competitive examinations. But a local council, generally speaking, will appoint men, even to its highest positions, who may just happen to impress it favourably. These are not always the same men as would have come to the top in a stiff, impersonal test. But Local Councils now receive guidance from two quarters. The Ministry of Health, to take one example, insists upon Medical Officers of Health being properly qualified, and no one can be appointed to this office without this Ministry's sanction. And the professional associations of the various other officials (rather similar to trade unions) now hold examinations of their own, and any large authority, at least, will make appointments only from among people who have passed these various examinations. But this is not entirely satisfactory. For one thing, not all of these associations are fully recognised; sometimes two or three of them are disputing the same field. For another thing, a man might be very well qualified in his profession, say as an Accountant, yet he might lack certain of the qualities of tact, initiative, and of human sympathy which can contribute a lot to the good running of local government. For another thing, it might be in the public interest to open these appointments to a wider field, say to women, as the national civil service has been opened, but the professional associations might not do this.

It really lies with the local authorities to combine in order to raise their officials to a national status. But they show little sign of doing this.

Another much-needed reform is to have a rank of administrators in the Local Government service. The national civil service has one great secret of success—the great bulk of its highest officials have no technical qualifications whatever; they are not qualified as Medical men, nor as Accountants, nor as Engineers nor as anything else. They are men and women of proved general ability, culture, and common sense. They can be relied upon to arrange things, to discuss intelligently, to read well into any subject which comes in front of them, and to see well into the future. At least that is the ideal, and there is no doubt that our civil service makes a very fine approach to it. But a Local Authority has all of its Departments, with extremely few exceptions, run by technical men.

The result is that a highly trained doctor may be found laboriously explaining to a committee why certain painting should be done to his hospitals, and may have to go round hiring houses to be used as day nurseries. The results cannot be as good as they should be. On the one hand, the actual medical work, the care of patients in the hospitals, should have the full time and attention of the medical staff. On the other hand, the painting and the letting are not likely to be done any the better for being arranged by a man with superb medical qualifications. This is but a small example. Doubtless the main drawback is that highly qualified men who have to immerse themselves in detail cannot devote themselves to that research from which great advances might flow.

If we had general administrators of high ability in charge of local government departments they could at least see that minor practical details were attended to and they could also have time to plan for the future. The Department of Health has here been taken only as one example. When an Engineer, in addition to all his ordinary duties, is

asked also to prepare a town plan, then we have another example which, while it may appear comic at first sight, may have tragic results. There is undoubtedly a very strong case for local councils employing men without technical qualifications, but with enough ability to see that the intentions of the Ministries and of the Councils are carried out in a far-sighted way.

At present Local Councils have one official who may come near to being a pure administrator. He is the Clerk, recognised everywhere as the chief official and confirmed in this position because he sits next to the Mayor at Council meetings, advising him as to the interpretation of minutes affecting all the committees. But Clerks are always lawyers, so that they also tend to be technical men, and they may devote much of their time to interpreting the law as it affects their Councils, and to conducting legal cases in which their Councils are involved, rather than to studying the development of their whole administrations. There is a strong case for beginning to appoint Town Clerks who are not lawyers, and for leaving legal matters to a legal department.

As usual, one or two Councils have been sufficiently advanced and far sighted to lead the way in these matters. At least one has an administrative Medical Officer of Health, not a medical man, in addition to the ordinary M.O.H. Another has a Development Officer whose duty appears to be to advise upon everything affecting the future prosperity of the town, such as its attractiveness to new industries; an immensely important duty. It is to be hoped that other municipalities will follow.

Another administrator badly needed by all Local Governments is a Public Relations Officer. At present, all important Government Departments have such officers, and there is no doubt that they can do a great deal in the way of satisfying aggrieved members of the public. Local Councils, as everybody knows only too well, are often the centre of numerous grievances and complaints. Citizens are often not encouraged to take their affairs to the council offices, and may be dealt with only by a junior clerk if they do. Councillors are often not keen upon taking up complaints which might require them to criticise officials, though this ought to be one of the main duties of a Councillor. The present writer hopes that after this war Local Authorities will take it as one of their main duties to keep on good terms with their publics and to supply them with expert guidance upon a great many matters. It is to be hoped that Citizens Advice Bureaux have come to stay and that they may be able to develop into a good municipal enterprise.

When you go to your Town Hall for advice, do you always get it in a convenient form? Do you often go to your Town Hall for advice?

Officials and their Committees

Officials and the Chairmen of their committees work in double harness; for example, the Medical Officer of Health with the Chairman of the Health Committee. But the official is always the man in charge of the work. If the M.O.H. forbade his chairman to enter one of his hospitals (except as a patient) he would be within his rights. The Chairman, on the other hand, has behind him the authority of the Council to say what the Council requires to be done. It is generally

believed, and very correctly, that the official and the Chairman can sway any committee on any important point. But it is nearly always the official who does most of the swaying. There are several reasons for this : the official knows the regulations and so can generally overrule his committee if need be ; the official has a full technical knowledge of the work, so that while the Chairman and the committee may possibly advise him, they are much more often advised by him ; officials will write memoranda, while Councillors, though they may have had a training in public speaking, generally find their powers of expression very limited at a committee table. Another very important point is that the official really decides which matters are to be put before a committee. Thus, he may, if he thinks it advisable, keep some of the most important matters to himself or just discuss them with his chairman. A committee member may find that he is able to raise extra business only when everybody wants to go home. Finally, there is a fearful tendency on the part of committees to waste the great bulk of their time upon matters of such triviality that they could have been decided by a junior clerk.

Do you think that Local Councils should be conducted more on the model of the House of Commons?

The Importance of Clean Government

Corruption means that certain people are making some kind of gain at the public expense, to which they are not properly entitled. All Governments, at one time or another, will be accused of allowing corruption to seep into their administration. Even the cleanest of ships will have an occasional rat. English Local Government is very often accused of corruption, though these accusations are generally made only by word of mouth and generally turn out to have but little substance. It is, however, of absolutely first class importance that every local council should not merely be above corruption, but should be so high above it that tongues cannot wag. Petty forms of corruption, perhaps better called favouritism, should be keenly looked out for and immediately stamped upon. The letting of Council Houses in a great many local authorities led to whole campaigns of discontented talk. This was because people saw Councillors, and the relatives of Councillors getting these houses "out of their turn." Councillors have been known to obtain employment with firms who, in turn, got orders from committees of which the Councillors were members. When an appointment, perhaps for a job as school caretaker, or perhaps for any other kind of post in the Council's service, has fallen vacant, it has been known for applicants discreetly to canvass among councillors whom they might, for example, know through being in the same political party. It has even been known for members and chairmen of Committees to obtain employment for their sons or nephews in the department which their committee supervises, but this is a practice so reprehensible and unwise in every way that Councils can seldom have consented to it in recent years. These just indicate a few of the ways in which Councils may, unless their members are very vigilant, lose the respect of the public.

A larger source of corruption, in the past, has been the giving of contracts to firms with which members of the Council had connections. There are now legal safeguards against this practice. But constant

vigilance is required in order to see that money is not made out of knowledge which is in the possession of Councillors. For example, if a number of people, known to be friends of public representatives, are found to have bought land across which the Council is to build a road, then such a blow may be struck at the good faith of that Council as may poison local affairs for many years to come. This, although the whole speculation may be due merely to "careless talk" on the part of some Councillor and not because of any bad intentions.

It is a difficult question. A Councillor is so often asked to help people—sometimes people in genuine distress and sometimes people who will plague him until he gets something which they want. He ought to turn away the latter, but if he does so they may use their influence against him at the next election and he may lose his seat. On the other hand, if he yields to them he is guilty of introducing favouritism into public matters. His position may be very difficult. Again, if he busily and effectively gets things done for people in genuine need, he can only do this by keeping on favourable terms with the officials. He may come to depend upon the officials for getting those things done which will help him to win his next election. This is serious, for it means that, unless he is a person of altogether exceptional character, he will not dare to criticise the officials and so will fall down on one of his main public duties.

Do you think that anything should be done to give Councillors a stronger and more independent position?

How can we get Local Government absolutely above any suspicion of favouritism? One suggestion is that we should have these Public Relations Officers whom we have already mentioned, and that people in distress should go to them instead of to their Councillors. This would leave Councillors more free to criticise the administration and to devote thought to the future of their Town or County. Another suggestion is that matters such as the placing of contracts and the buying of land should be left in the hands of those administrators whose appointment we have already suggested.

Who are the Councillors ?

No question is more important than this one. Almost everything depends upon the most enlightened, the best educated, the most energetic and the most fearless men and women being willing to seek council membership. It might seem difficult to ask whether we now get the services of these people. So much depends upon personal estimates. But there are certain facts which we can get at. One is, that though the people serving on Councils now may be very excellent people, there are, on a great many Councils, but few who are under the age of fifty and many who are greatly above that age. This cannot be right. If Councils were attracting the right sort of people they would certainly, like the House of Commons, have their share of members in their thirties and even in their twenties. Further, it is obvious on many councils that though the members are persons of excellent character and of good ability, yet the ablest business men of the town, its most outstanding lawyers and doctors, and its journalists and university teachers, are conspicuously not there.

There may be several reasons for this, and no doubt are. One, which will apply in Councils with Labour majorities, is that these

Councils are filled with working men. We shall all agree that this is an excellent thing. It proves the growth of true democracy. Yet we shall also feel regretful that certain other people have lost their seats. Another is that our present Local Government boundaries have not moved with the times, so that a lot of the ablest people in any town may live in a "suburb" ten, or twenty or thirty miles away. They may be busy all day and then have to catch a train at five or six o'clock in order to get home. People in this position are apt to regard the town merely as a place in which they get their livelihood, to look upon their "suburb" just as a pleasant place in which to relax and sleep, and not to be devoted to the civic interest of either.

But, without a doubt, the thing which most limits us in the choice of Councillors is the fact that practically everybody in this world has to work all day for his bread and butter. He has not time to attend a council with its innumerable committee meetings. Here are some suggestions for remedying this: first, that Councillors should be paid. At first sight, this may seem only reasonable. But the present writer can only say that the more he considers it the more he becomes afraid of it. There would be the great danger of creating a class of people who might cling to Council membership as their source of livelihood, or as a substantial addition to it. Further, payment would not compensate business men for giving up their businesses or doctors and lawyers for giving up their practices, while business firms and universities would scarcely be able to give leave of absence to members of their staffs for as many years as they might happen to hold a seat on the Council.

A much better suggestion is that Council and Committee meetings should be held in the evenings as, indeed, some of them are now. It is generally held that evening meetings give an extra opportunity to Councillors who are weekly wage earners. But they should give quite the same advantage to all other people. Is it possible that some Councils will not agree to evening meetings for the reason that these would open the field too widely and possibly deprive existing members of their present opportunities of rendering public service?

Are you in favour of evening Council meetings? Would you stand for Council membership yourself if your Council met in the evenings?

Coupled with this suggestion of evening meetings is the suggestion that there should not be nearly so many committees. This would mean leaving more decisions to officials, and would make more necessary than ever the appointment of general administrators. It would have other very good effects, especially that Councillors would cease to drug themselves with trifling detail. The work of Council membership would thus be made more attractive to able persons.

The Future

Local government in this country is but young. It is only an experiment of some fifty years standing. It is an interesting fact that there are quite a number of Councillors still active who might have been elected, and possibly were, when councils took their present form. On one Council alone, known to the present writer, there are four such, and all of them still active.

Since local government is so young, it is not surprising that we frequently hear suggestions for changing it in many ways. We have,

indeed, put forward quite a number of these suggestions in this pamphlet. But there are many others which space will not permit us to indicate here. The main group of suggestions, however, may be said to lie in the direction of joining present local authorities together so that we should have them bigger and fewer. This is often known as Regionalism. The mere fact of having local authorities bigger, we should be quite clear, would not solve all the problems which we have indicated. But it should help.

Several reasons are put forward for joining local authorities together. One is that at present a rich town may have poor neighbours whom it does not help, even though it may draw much of its wealth from the work carried on by those neighbours and from the money which their people spend in its shops. If the town and its neighbours were joined under one council, then all the wealth would be equally shared.

Another, closely allied to this one, is that poor and small authorities very often cannot afford such things as swimming baths and public libraries and sometimes, indeed, even enough sewers. If they were amalgamated with richer towns the new council would be more able to remedy this.

But perhaps the main argument for Regionalism is that since the motorisation of England in the early nineteen twenties towns have so spread that present local government boundaries have become almost meaningless. Businesses have moved outside town boundaries and people have done the same. Small townships which used to have their own shops and amusements now find their people taking the bus to shopping centres in bigger towns.

This matter has an important psychological aspect. People can be expected to be keenly interested only in places with which they have plenty of vital connections. If a man goes to a borough only for the purpose of sleeping in it, and goes elsewhere for his work and his games and his concerts, then we can scarcely expect him to develop a keen "civic interest" in that borough.

Has local interest failed because it has been too local?

Another argument is that we are no longer willing to leave people in country districts with primitive sanitation, no tap water, picturesque but damp cottages, no medical service beyond the local doctor, and higher education only for a few. Modern services, if they are good for people in towns, must be good for people on the countryside. Further, if these people do not get them they may refuse to stay on the countryside and English agriculture may decline for lack of people to work the land. But these modern services are extremely costly if supplied to country areas alone, while they are not nearly so costly if they are supplied by means of big towns extending their existing services outwards. Hence the argument for having town and country under one local—or regional—government.

BOOK LIST

There are many large standard works on Local Government, but the following are all short and readable :—

Local Government Face to Face	A. C. Stewart	N.A.L.G.O.	1933	Free
The Councillor	A. N. C. Shelley	Nelson Discussion Books	1939	2/6
The A.B.C. of Local Government	C. Kent Wright	Evaus Bros.	1938	4/6
A City Council from Within	Sir Ernest Simon	Longmans Green	1926	7/6
The Development of Local Government	W. A. Robson	Allen & Unwin	1931	12/6
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The Responsible Citizen	S. H. Cair	Nelson Discussion Books	1938	2/6
Ourselves and the Community	E. E. Reynolds	Cambridge University Press	1932	3/6
British Institutions of To-day	K. Derry	Longmans Green	1937	4/6
The Peopled Kingdom ..	T. G. Williams	Pitman	1935	5/-

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